

## *Chiropractic Medicine, The Great Protector*

The American Heritage Dictionary (2<sup>nd</sup> College Ed.) defines “chiropractic” as “a method of treating disease by manipulation of the joints of the body, especially the spinal column.” In essence its meaning is “to work with the hands,” deriving from the Greek **cheir** (meaning “hand”) and **prassein** (meaning “to do or to work”). A chiropractor heals the body by working the spine with his hands.

The early history of Chiropractic did not have the sophisticated terminology of “nervous systems” and such. It was a somewhat mystical practice whereby manipulation and realignment of the bones allowed the “life force” to be restored to deprived areas of the body and rejuvenate it. While the mysticism and magical theories have been removed from the practice of chiropractic medicine, the same principles apply.

The goal of chiropractic is to stimulate your body’s ability to heal itself. The brain, spinal cord, and nerves control the self-healing functions of the body. Chiropractors work with the bones and nerves of the spinal column and spinal cord. They locate points at which misplaced spinal vertebrae are impinging the nerves traveling down the spinal cord and out to the muscles, organs, and glands of the body. An organ or area that is fed by impinged nerves can suffer from an inadequate nerve supply for years, though there may be no pain or obvious symptoms. The patient will be unaware that certain organs or areas of the body are being

weakened, and there may be progressive damage to the spinal column, nerves, and affected organs.

After locating these misplaced vertebrae or **subluxations**, the chiropractor repositions the vertebrae and releases the pressure on the nerves. This is not a violent process, because the muscles are continuously trying to pull the vertebrae into their proper position. The chiropractor doesn’t actually move the vertebrae back into place, but simply applies the little bit of force needed to free it so that your body can realign it. This process is called the **adjustment**.

To perform a standard series of adjustments typically takes about ten minutes, and generally include the upper, mid and lower back, as well as the neck and hips.

Most people do not experience pain during an adjustment, although if you are already in substantial pain due to severe subluxation, the adjustment in that area may be painful for a split second. However, you should feel an immediate sense of relief as the pressure on that part of your spine is released and healing begins. Almost all patients who try chiropractic treatment agree that the relief from the pain or other symptoms that follows more than compensates for any discomfort caused by the adjustment.

Some patients dislike the sound of a spinal adjustment, called **cavitation**, which is much like the sound of cracking your knuckles. However, this sound is perfectly normal and does not indicate any trauma to the spine or joints; in fact, it indicates that adjustment and healing are taking place. Air bubbles that have

been under pressure within a joint are rapidly released when it is realigned, causing the popping sound. This usually happens during an adjustment, but is not necessary for the adjustment to work. Many patients experience a sense of warmth and energy flooding through their bodies immediately following an adjustment. This is a sign that normal channels of energy are suddenly restored to normal activity.

While people most often seek chiropractic treatment for chronic pain, stress, or injury to the spine or joints, it is in fact effective for a broad range of medical complaints. These include:

- Headaches
- Bruxism (teeth grinding)
- Dizziness
- Nervousness
- Tendonitis
- Chest, back or shoulder pain
- Asthma
- Throat and neck pain
- Knee/elbow or extremities pain
- Difficulty walking
- Sciatica
- Rectal trouble

Also, malfunctions of the thyroid, heart, lungs, gall bladder, liver, stomach, pancreas, spleen, adrenals, kidneys, small and large intestines, reproductive organs, and prostate can also be improved with chiropractic techniques.

An adjustment is often followed by an enhanced sense of relaxation and peace that may last for the rest of the day or week. Soothing warmth throughout the body, deeper sleep, and relief of presenting symptoms are all typical after-effects of a

chiropractic treatment. Many patients also report increased mental clarity and energy, mood elevation and enhanced flexibility. As continued treatment releases deep-seated stresses to your spine and nervous system, better movement and balance and increased ability to breathe deeply are possible. However, the most important health benefits are usually taking place beneath your consciousness, as nerve communication to the organs and the overall functioning of the nervous system are improved.

Chiropractic treatment is extremely safe and is routinely practiced by many thousands of licensed practitioners in the US and around the world. A chiropractor undergoes years of training and performs hundreds to thousands of adjustments before working on his first patient, and he must pass the demanding National Board Examination to become a Doctor of Chiropractic. Even more rigorous tests must be passed before a chiropractic doctor is officially licensed to practice.

Cases of patient injury by chiropractors are extremely rare; indeed, they are many times lower than cases of medical malpractice by MDs and injuries from prescription drugs and surgeries. If you choose a competent practitioner, you can be assured that your treatment will be as safe as it is effective. You will also be saving yourself the expenses and dangers involved with drugs and invasive procedures.

No two patients are alike, and the length of your treatment is determined by the length and severity of your condition, the

consistency with which you keep to your chiropractic appointments, and the supportive measures you take to enhance the healing effects of the adjustments (such as improving your posture and going easy on any stressed areas of the body for a time) if your problems are of a long-term nature, they may require an initial series of appointments every week, followed by less frequent maintenance appointments. In general, it is a good idea to have a spinal checkup and adjustment regularly simply to ensure good spinal health. In any case, the relief you experience from the first few adjustments will most likely make it easy for you to keep future appointments!

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) is an increasingly common affliction characterized by tingling and numbness in the hands and wrists and intense pain, often waking the sufferer up at night. There may be similar symptoms in the neck, shoulder, elbow, and upper arm. An increasing percentage of the millions of CTS sufferers are currently seeking relief from chiropractic treatment.

Where is this “tunnel”? Actually it is in your wrist, where your carpal (meaning wrist) bones form a tunnel-like structure: the “carpal tunnel,” through which nine tendons and one nerve (the median nerve) pass.

Anyone doing repetitive tasks can get CTS, such as housewives, secretaries, musicians, and computer users. In addition, fractures, a fall on the hand and poorly designed or vibrating hand tools may misalign the bones in the

hand, causing CTS. Pregnant women, birth control pill users, and individuals with a hypoactive thyroid may also be prone to it.

The relationship between spinal health and CTS has been documented by a number of researchers who found spinal root irritation in patients who had CTS. Others found that nerve compression in the neck can block the flow of nutrients to the nerves in the wrist, making it more susceptible to injury (this is called the “double crush syndrome”). So it is not surprising that in about 1000 cases of CTS that were investigated, it was found that a large number of those suffering from CTS also had arthritis of the neck.

Traditional medicine addresses CTS with pain management strategies, such as diuretic or anti-inflammatory prescription drugs, wrist immobilization, or ice treatments. Failing that, corticosteroids may be injected into the wrist - a procedure that may relieve pain but is itself extremely painful and has a high relapse rate.

The sciatic nerve is the longest and largest nerve in the human body. It consists of five roots that leave your lower back, join in your pelvis, and then travel to the muscles and joints of your thigh, knee, calf, ankle, foot and toes.

Sciatica is an inflammation of the sciatic nerve. The pain caused by sciatica can radiate down the back of your legs, thighs, hips, ankles, feet and toes. It can also cause pain in your back. The sensations that sciatica sufferers experience vary from burning, sharp pains, nerve sensations such as pins-and-

needles, tingling, prickling, and tenderness to numbness in the leg.

Like most other conditions, sciatica has a wide variety of causes, but an unhealthy spine with a protruded or ruptured disc can irritate the sciatic nerve causing sciatica. Cases of sciatica have been reported following accidents, injuries, and even childbirth, usually due to spinal misalignment. However, advanced diabetes can also cause sciatic nerve irritation, as can arthritis, constipation, tumors and even vitamin deficiencies.

Traditional medicine treats pain with prescription drugs such as painkillers and muscle relaxants, and adjunct therapies such as physical therapy and orthopedic devices. Using chemicals to mask the symptoms does not solve the underlying problem and simply allows it to continue and worsen. While physical therapy and devices have their uses, and can be somewhat effective, if the nervous system channels are not kept clear and the area is fundamentally out of alignment, then the healing process will be slowed the body's natural pain management system is prevented from operating properly.

Furthermore, all painkillers carry the risk of drug dependency, as well as numerous side effects. Many sciatica sufferers experience unprecedented relief from their symptoms with chiropractic treatment, and thereby avoid a life of chronic pain, as well as the prospect of spinal surgery.

While chiropractic treatment is not indicated in all cases of sciatica, anyone suffering from CTS should consult a chiropractor to ensure that

their spinal column is free from nerve pressure between the arms and wrists and the nerves in the neck. A chiropractic adjustment of the spine and extremities can mean a pain-free wrist without surgery.

With sciatica, chiropractic care seems to be the most effective when problems first occur. However, even those who have suffered for longer periods, it can provide excellent results. The chiropractic approach is a drug-free and natural alternative to alleviate your lower back and sciatica symptoms.

Most people view chiropractic as a practice done once pain has begun and symptoms have emerged. This is the wrong thought process. Once pain originates, this means that the situation has reached the tipping point and now there is a real problem that needs to be addressed. Emergency room thinking. Pain is the last symptom on the chain. Pain indicates a situation that continued too long undetected. Chiropractic's real power is in its ability to *prevent* such conditions as sciatica and CTS, as well as improve general health and well-being. It is this aspect of the technology that should be most strongly embraced and utilized.



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